

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

SENT TO D.C.
5/7/2001

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Chicago Varnish Company Building**

other names/site number **Varnish Building**

2. Location

street & number **33 West Kinzie Street** _____ Not for publication

city or town **Chicago** _____ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60610**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William C. Wheeler /SHP
Signature of certifying official

4-10-01
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Chicago Varnish Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u> objects
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Chicago Varnish Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Trade

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Trade

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Other: Dutch Renaissance Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Brick**

Roof **Ceramic Tile**

Walls **Brick**

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance **1895** Significant Dates **1895**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder

Cobb, Henry Ives, Architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **Less than one acre**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	16	447790	4637430	3 _____
2	_____	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 01000649

Date Listed: 6/14/01

Chicago Varnish Company Building
Property Name

Cook
County

IL
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Poland

Signature of the Keeper

6/14/01

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 7: The first paragraph is not consistent concerning the location of the non-contributing addition. It projects from the east side of the historic building.

Section 9: "Primary Location of Additional Information" was left blank. Information is housed at the Chicago Landmarks Commission.

This information was confirmed/provided by Tracey Sculle of the IL SHPO staff.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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National Park Service

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

Description

Exterior, Summary

The Chicago Varnish Company Building, located at 33 West Kinzie Street in Chicago, Illinois, stands at the southeast corner of Kinzie and Dearborn streets, in the heart of the city's River North district. The Dutch Renaissance Revival building is rectangular in plan, with four and one-half stories standing atop a basement. The construction is load-bearing masonry with two principal bays running on a north-south axis. The architect was Henry Ives Cobb who led one of the largest and most successful architecture firms in Chicago. The building was completed in 1895 when Cobb's office was also at work on commissions for the University of Chicago (1891-1900) and Federal Building, demolished, (1895-1905). The building occupies 90 feet along Dearborn Street and 45 feet along Kinzie Street. The south, west and north elevations are treated as primary facades. The south façade stands approximately 20 feet from a neighboring building. A two-story, non-contributing addition is adjoined to the Chicago Varnish Company Building along the latter's north façade. The current entrance to the Chicago Varnish Building faces north onto Kinzie Street. The three finished elevations are of red pressed brick with contrasting grey limestone used ornamentally to outline the building edges, window frames, and to mark continuous sill and lintel courses. Stepped gables with copper gutters rise from the steeply pitched red ceramic tile roof at the fourth level. The roof is a modified cross gable with stepped dormers. The high and steeply pitched gables and dormers give a strong vertical aspect to the building. This verticality balances the strongly horizontal lines expressed in stone coursings and lintels wrapping the building on its three finished elevations.

North Elevation

The north elevation – the narrow aspect of the building – contains the main entrance to the building. Four windows and two doors are on the first level. Moving from east to west, the sequence is: service door, a small-paned window, main entry, a small-paned window, another small-paned window and, finally, a plate-glass window surmounted by a projecting limestone architrave which is topped, in turn, by a richly carved stone-framed roundel window. Above and to the right of the roundel window is an original stone relief sign reading, "Kinzie." Stone quoins separate the door and window openings. High limestone sills run beneath the four windows. Articulated stone coursing runs continuously above the window and door openings. Stone voussoirs radiate above the

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two doors and three small-paned windows at the coursing. Above the roundel window and coursing a contemporary neon sign is mounted to the brick.

A continuous stone sill runs beneath six identical and evenly distributed one-over-one windows at the second story. Stone quoins mark the window and building edges. Five flagpoles are placed between the windows. The articulated stone coursing is repeated, running continuously above the second-story windows. Stone voussoirs radiate from the coursing above each window.

The third story is similarly detailed, with a modest adjustment to the window dimensions. Although they are the same width as the windows on the second story, the third-story windows are slightly shorter, thus exaggerating the building's vertical aspect. At the third story, there are six one-over-one windows, aligned above the second-story windows. Once again, a detailing of stone quoins outlines the window and building edges. Stone coursing surmounts the windows and is topped, in turn, by voussoirs which radiate out above each window.

The fourth story and attic level are contained within the high and steeply angled roof. Two large dormers with stepped parapets and stone coping spring up from the roof on the north elevation. Each dormer contains a pair of double-hung windows, proportionately smaller than the windows below, topped with stone coursing and the stone voussoirs that are this building's trademark. The peak of each dormer - at the attic level - has a roundel window with stone trim radiating out from its circumference. A stepped ridge mounts the roof between the two dormers and marks the division of the building's structural bays.

The non-contributing addition is most visible from the north. It, however, is plainly distinguished from the historic Chicago Varnish Building. The addition is a two-story brick structure with a single glass door and without windows of any kind. Painted in the manner of a billboard with an image of the famous Chicago sports broadcaster, Harry Caray, (for whom the current restaurant is named) the addition could not be more different from the finely detailed Chicago Varnish Building.

South Elevation

The south elevation is similar to the north elevation in most respects. The south does deviate from the north, however, in several key aspects. Rather than a main entry there is

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a service door on this elevation. In addition, a fire escape descends from the fourth story to the ground on the south side of the building. Last, the south elevation is inaccessible to Dearborn (the north-south street) because of a gradual change in elevation along that street corridor which leaves the south building façade about one half-story below grade. As a result of the change in grade, the window framing (including radiating voussoirs and a continuous coursing) for the six evenly placed basement-level windows is visible on the south elevation.

The service door exit occurs at the first-story level near the east end of the elevation. The easternmost window opening accommodates a large duct. The remaining four window openings in the middle and to the west of the elevation are uniform, double-hung windows. Stone quoining outlines the window and door openings. Continuous stone coursing and sills run above and below the windows and door. Above each window, stone voussoirs radiate. A contemporary neon sign obscures some of the voussoirs at the west end of this elevation.

At the second story, there are six openings. Moving from east to west, there is a window, a fire door, a window, a fire door and two more windows. The two fire doors, on opposite sides of the bearing wall, exit onto the fire escape. The windows at this level are double hung. Stone quoins mark the window and building edges. The articulated stone coursing is repeated above the second-story windows. Stone voussoirs radiate from the coursing above each window and door.

The third story is similar to the second story. There are two fire doors placed on opposite sides of the bearing wall and four double-hung windows. Once again, a detailing of stone quoins outlines the window and building edges. Stone coursing surmounts the windows and is topped, in turn, by voussoirs radiating from above each window and door.

The fourth story and attic level are contained within the high and steeply angled roof. Two large dormers with stepped parapets and stone coping spring up from the roof on the south elevation. Each dormer contains a double-hung window and a fire door. The windows are topped with stone coursing and the stone voussoirs that are this building's trademark. The peak of each dormer - at the attic level - has a roundel window with stone trim radiating out from its circumference. A stepped ridge mounts the roof between the two dormers and marks the division of the building's structural bays.

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West Elevation

While the detailing motifs remain the same, the fenestration along the west elevation of the building is rhythmically varied rather than repeated as it is on the north and south elevations. The variety in fenestration is driven by the positioning of the cross gables at the opposite ends of this elevation. Windows are clustered directly beneath the gables. In the center of the elevation, the rhythm opens up with more wall area left between the windows.

At the first-story level, there are eight openings, including seven identical one-over-one large windows repeated beginning at the south end and proceeding north. The final opening, a plate-glass window at the north end of this elevation, is substantially smaller, topped by a limestone architrave and, above that, a roundel window with an elaborate carved stone surround. This window and its framing are identical to a window described previously on the building's north elevation. Above the roundel window there is an original stone relief sign reading "Dearborn." Stone quoins mark the window and building edges. A limestone sill is visible beneath all but the last two windows at the south end of this elevation. The sill below those windows has been obscured by the rising angle of Dearborn Street. A fraction of the voussoir detail topping one basement-level window is visible on this elevation at the sidewalk. This detail disappears below the angle of the street as well. Above the first-story windows, there is a continuous limestone coursing topped by radiating voussoirs centered above each of the seven identical windows. Above the plate-glass window, its architrave and roundel, a contemporary neon sign, identical to that on the north elevation, is mounted to the brick.

At the second story, there are ten double-hung windows. They are grouped three and three at the north and south ends beneath the gables. The remaining four windows are spread evenly across the central portion of this elevation. A continuous sill runs below these windows. Above them is a continuous course with voussoirs centered above each window. Stone quoining marks the edges of the building and the windows. The third story is identical to the second in the number of windows, their proportions, spacing, and detailing.

Two gables at opposite ends of the west façade rise from the roof. Each gable contains three windows at the fourth level. These windows are framed by continuous sill and lintel courses, quoining and are topped with radiating voussoirs. Above the fourth level the gables are stepped with stone coping. At the attic level, each gable contains a roundel

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window from which stone ornament radiates around the circumference. Three small dormers are evenly spaced between the gables. Each dormer contains one double-hung window and voussoirs, above which a stepped parapet with stone coping rises.

East Elevation

The east façade is unfinished. This elevation is partly obscured by the two-story non-contributing addition. That portion which is visible is painted brick and without windows. The outline of the cross gable is visible from the east.

Alterations, Exterior

The main entry was originally located at the building's northwest corner. That doorway, which had been recessed, was enclosed prior to 1963, first, with doors, and later in the present configuration, with large single-pane windows facing north onto Kinzie Street and west onto Dearborn Street. The lavish stonework at this corner, however, is still substantially intact, including the heavy original lintels topped by elaborate carved-stone roundels. Clocks originally mounted in these circular openings were removed sometime before 1963. A pair of small stone finials, removed after 1963, originally flanked these roundels. Stone plaques reading "Kinzie" and "Dearborn" remain in place above the former entry. A pair of marble mosaic plaques with the name "Chicago Varnish Company" is in place above the entry although they are obscured by a contemporary sign. A large ground-level window opening on the north elevation has been enlarged to become the main entry to the building.

In 1963, the City of Chicago raised and angled Dearborn Street, thus obscuring the uppermost portion of a basement window and the sills of two ground-floor windows on the west elevation of the building.

The windows throughout the building are replicas of the originals and were put in place during a restoration of the façade that took place in 1986.

Originally, the gables and dormers alike were surmounted by stone half-circles and elongated finials. These were removed sometime before 1929.

On the south elevation, basement-level windows have been bricked in. To comply with fire code, windows on the first, second, third and fourth levels have been converted to fire exits.

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Interior, Summary

The interior configuration of the spaces is fundamentally the same as it was originally. A working freight elevator near the northeast corner of the building, rises from the basement through the four stories of the building. The floors are divided in half by a brick, bearing wall. Since 1971, the building has been used for a series of restaurants. Before that, the Varnish Building had been converted for use by food-processing companies. As a result, the building has undergone interior revisions over the years and original finishes and fixtures have disappeared.

First Floor

The relocated main entry and new vestibule open on to a hallway where a station for the restaurant hostess is located. A stair up to the second floor is located in the north center portion of the building. The first floor is divided into two primary spaces separated by a brick, bearing wall. The west room is now used as a bar. The second room has become a large modern, restaurant kitchen. Located near the northeast corner of the building is a freight elevator, access to which is afforded through doors to Kinzie Street.

Early written descriptions of the building say a showroom or "resin museum" was included in the Chicago Varnish Building. It is likely the museum occupied what is now the bar, that being the most visible and splendid interior in the structure. That room has a high ceiling and contains 14 large windows which draw in light from three directions. The bar runs parallel to the bearing wall and high tables are arrayed along the window wall. The room is furnished with new fixtures and finishes sympathetic to the period in which the building was erected. Near the northwest corner of this room, a stair leads down to the basement level. This stair has likely been relocated. In its present location, it would have interfered with the building's original entry at the northwest corner.

On the first floor the Chicago Varnish Building opens to the aforementioned non-contributing addition through a hallway. In the ground-floor addition there are two dining rooms. The proportions of these two rooms mimic those of the Varnish Building. A brick wall, similarly, divides these rooms from one another.

Second Floor

A new decorative stair in period style stands at the northeast corner of the addition and connects the first and second floors. A large banquet room occupies the second floor of

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the addition. On the second floor of the Varnish Building, there is a second large kitchen (used for private parties and located directly above the first-floor kitchen). The kitchen has dropped ceilings and an extensive venting system. The freight elevator occupies the northeast corner. Rising to the third floor in the north center portion of the building is a half-turn staircase which appears to be original. Along the west side of the Chicago Varnish Building, a private dining room is located (for parties of approximately 30 people). This room has been decorated in period style with a simulated press-tin roof and faux plaster relief molding. In the southwest corner, there is a private office with dropped ceilings. The interior of the office is new. The locations and proportions of the windows throughout this floor are original.

Third Floor

The west half of the Varnish Building's third floor is devoted to modern offices for restaurant management. Two large private offices occupy the northwest corner. A work area for secretaries and support staff is south of the private offices. Another private, enclosed office is located at the head of the stairs. Separate dressing areas for male and female staff are located at the south end of the building. Two more enclosed, modern offices are placed against the exterior west wall. With the exception of the windows' proportions and placement, the freight elevator, stair, and bearing walls, nothing on this floor is original.

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor is primarily dedicated to storage. The exception is a private office with bath at the northwest corner of the building that may formerly have been used as an apartment. The balance of the floor appears never to have been altered or finished. The masonry bearing walls are painted white. It is likely these spaces were originally used to store the varnishes the company produced. Now, these spaces are used to store equipment, furniture and the souvenirs sold in the restaurant.

Attic

The attic space is untouched. There is little useable space. Wood supports and bracing for the high roof are visible here. Light from the roundel windows cut into the gables illuminate this space.

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Significance

The Chicago Varnish Building at 33 West Kinzie meets Criterion C as a locally significant and exceptionally pure example of the rare Dutch Renaissance Revival style in Chicago. Its period of significance is 1895, the year in which the building was completed.

Dutch Renaissance Revival in Chicago

During the late-19th and early-20th centuries, American architects experimented with many European-based architectural styles. Architectural historian, Alan Gowans, writes of “the resultant diversity” in American architecture saying, “Correlation between style and types were vaguely defined but consistent enough in usage to make [their applications] meaningful in terms of life.”

In the case of the Chicago Varnish Building, the parallels between history, style and use are close and apt. The original Dutch Renaissance style reached its height during the 16th and 17th centuries, a time when Holland was a leading force in international trade and commerce. A strong Dutch middle class – profiting from trade and its nation’s colonies in North America and the South Pacific – was at its most comfortable, and a distinctive type of commercial architecture developed. As merchants, traders, and moneyed people, the Dutch middle class was large and could afford to spend money embellishing the buildings it used for business, such as warehouses.

During the late-19th century, Chicago was similarly situated economically, with the rise of a large business-oriented middle class. From this perspective, the Dutch Renaissance style was an ideal model for an American commercial building, such as the Chicago Varnish Company.

Another aspect of Dutch Renaissance architecture is its traditional association with canals and water-borne commerce. With its proximity to the Chicago River (indeed when it was built in 1895 there was nothing between the Chicago Varnish Building and the Chicago River), the Varnish Building’s Dutch style could not have been more appropriate. The Chicago River was still a critical shipping link at the time the Varnish Building was in construction. This roughly matches the circumstances in Holland where canals were used to efficiently move goods to their markets and Dutch commercial buildings were frequently situated on waterfronts.

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Nevertheless, Dutch Renaissance Revival was an unusual choice for a late 19th-century building in Chicago. The use of this style is normally associated with the East Coast where examples of Dutch styles are plentiful. For instance, there are examples of original 17th-century Dutch architecture in urban areas and the Upper Hudson Valley of New York (which was named New Amsterdam until 1674 when the British seized the colony and renamed it). The Dutch had been in those areas of North America since the mid-1600s.

During the late-19th and early-20th centuries, two forms of Dutch architecture were revived in the United States: the Dutch Renaissance Revival, based on Holland's stepped gable, urban, mercantile buildings, and the Dutch Colonial Revival, which was inspired by farmhouses with gambrel roofs shaped like wide flaring bells. The Dutch Colonial was an especially popular style for houses in 1910-1929. The Chicago Historic Resources Survey lists more than 50 examples of them.

In contrast, the Dutch Renaissance Revival, with its distinctive roofline - what Alan Gowans calls its most "most intrinsically romantic and picturesque feature" - was far more rare than the Dutch Colonial style. The Chicago Varnish Building is one of the few examples of this style in Chicago, and one of the finest examples nationwide.

The building's series of stepped gables is its most prominent reference to Dutch Renaissance architecture. The high gables give special emphasis to the building's vertical quality, a characteristic of the Dutch Renaissance style. The building's profusion of ornament and its lively brickwork are also characteristic of the Dutch Renaissance Revival style. Brick is contrasted with decorative stonework that is typical of the Dutch style. Continuous sills and lintel courses, giving the impression of banding, are characteristic of the Dutch Renaissance Revival and are richly evident in the Chicago Varnish Building.

The quality of the workmanship is high on the Chicago Varnish building and it has been well maintained. The masonry is tight and the stone well fitted. The distinctive ornamental stonework remains mostly in place with the exception of the decorative finials that originally surmounted the gables.

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There is only one other Dutch Renaissance building standing in Chicago that was constructed for a commercial-warehouse use according to the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. That building, the McCormick Display building at 2423 West 17th Street, was designed by architect G.W. Ashby and constructed in 1928. It provides an interesting contrast to the Chicago Varnish Building. Where the reference to Dutch Renaissance architecture is explicit in the Chicago Varnish Building; reference to the Dutch Renaissance in the McCormick Display is more suggestive. The McCormick Building is built of brick and it possesses the essential stepped gable that signals Dutch Renaissance, but it is otherwise a straightforward structure without the exuberant ornament that distinguishes the Varnish building. A simpler building, less ambitious in affect, the McCormick Display's design is perfectly appropriate to its industrial use. But, by contrast, the McCormick highlights the extreme rarity of the Chicago Varnish Building and academic attention to recreating Dutch Renaissance details. Nor, with its altered first story and inauthentic fenestration has the McCormick Display Building survived with the same degree of integrity as the Varnish Building.

St. Ann's Church and School at 1818 S. Leavitt Street in Chicago, designed by architect R.C. Berlin in 1903, exhibits some of the details of the Dutch Renaissance style. St. Ann's is a four-and-a-half-story building with a cross-gable roof, stepped parapets and stone coping. A quoining detail is expressed in brick throughout the building. Added to the traditional Dutch details on St. Ann's, however, are Romanesque and Classical elements - including a Classical entrance and Romanesque-style fenestration - making this an impure example of the Dutch Renaissance style. In addition, St. Ann's had been substantially marred by significant exterior alterations such as metal double-hung window replacements, the loss of the original doors, and the addition of protective metal grilles at the first-story level.

Aside from the Chicago Varnish Building, the strongest example of Dutch Renaissance architecture in the city is the dozen rowhouses at 3801-21 S. Giles. These were designed by the architectural firm, Church and Jobson and built between 1894-95 for land speculator, C.E. Springer (heir of George Springer who built the "Springer Block" at the southwest corner of State and Randolph). Although none of the rowhouses have survived without obvious exterior alteration - such as replaced windows, aluminum storm doors and fiberglass awnings - the essential characteristics of the Dutch Renaissance style are still legible. These include the steeply pitched roof, ornamental contrasting stone banding, radiating voussoirs, cross gables and stone stepped pediments. Indeed the

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houses, massed together as they are, form a coherent and powerful statement about the Dutch Renaissance style.

Architect Henry Ives Cobb

Henry Ives Cobb ran one of Chicago's largest and most prominent architecture offices. He was a nationally known designer who employed a variety of historical styles. In Chicago, Cobb won many of the most prestigious commissions, including: the campus plans and several buildings for the University of Chicago (1891-1900); the Chicago Athletic Club Building (1893); J. A. McGill House (1890); several buildings at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893; the Newberry Library Building (1888-1892); the former Chicago Historical Society Building (1892-1896); and the Federal Building (1895-1905).

Henry Ives Cobb (1859-1931) was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. He worked for the Boston-based firm of Peabody & Stearns until 1881, when he left the firm and moved to Chicago after winning a competition to design the Union Club house (demolished).

In Chicago, Cobb formed a partnership with Charles S. Frost, another architect formerly with Peabody & Stearns. Cobb & Frost is best remembered for one of its earliest commissions, the "million-dollar mansion" for Potter Palmer (built 1882-85), which resembled a Norman castle. It stood – it has since been demolished – on Lake Shore Drive, between Banks and Schiller streets in the so-called "Gold Coast." The firm also designed commercial buildings and other large residences – including the Cable House (1885) a Chicago designated landmark – before the partnership was dissolved in 1888 and Cobb established an independent practice.

Most of Cobb's designs are distinguished examples of historically derived architecture. A description of his work in 1896, by the famed architecture critic Montgomery Schuyler in *Architectural Record*, discerns Cobb's approach from that of other local architects. "It will have been perceived that, much more than the other architects of Chicago whose works we have been considering, Mr. Cobb 'works in styles' and takes thought for academical correctness. But it is not classic purity but romantic picturesqueness that is the object of his quest, certainly in his successes."

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

Many of the buildings of Cobb's day were based loosely on historical styles of architecture but the precise detailing of his buildings made them of significantly higher caliber than others.

The prominence of Cobb's clients and commissions is evidence of his success. Cobb was an architect who, without being completely literal, convincingly adapted European styles to the American urban environment. Daniel Bluestone, in his 1991 book, *Constructing Chicago*, described Cobb as "experienced in linking cultural concerns and architectural forms."

As a modestly scaled commercial structure, the Chicago Varnish building was not the sort of design Henry Ives Cobb typically took. Although Cobb did do a few simple, loft buildings, he made his reputation designing and building civic structures, academic buildings, and homes for the wealthy. These were the sorts of commissions any architect would envy: high-profile jobs, often with budgets permitting the design flourishes that would otherwise have been left undone. In a recent interview, Julius Lewis, who wrote his University of Chicago masters' dissertation on Cobb, described him as "the Cadillac of architects in his day."

Again, quoting Montgomery Schuyler: "[T]he architect has reached a personal expression within the limits of an historical style, and has given evidence of an artistic individuality in addition to the abundant testimony given in his work to a remarkable technical equipment and a really astonishing versatility and facility."

This excerpt appeared in an issue of *Architectural Record* devoted to three Chicago firms: Adler & Sullivan, D.H. Burnham & Co., and Cobb. This grouping is its own measure of the high esteem in which Cobb was held during his career. But as he fast as his star rose, his practice rapidly declined. The financial panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression curtailed new construction, affecting Cobb and other architects. The commission for the Chicago Varnish Building, which he probably began working on in 1894, was one of Cobb's last in Chicago. Subsequently, Cobb and his historicist architecture fell out of favor as later historians began to view the works of Louis Sullivan (of Adler & Sullivan) and John Root (Daniel Burnham's partner) as the prelude to Modernism.

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

Cobb's final work here was the Federal Building (1895-1905) which stood at Dearborn and Adams streets until 1965, on the site of the current Federal Center. It featured a spectacular 300-foot-high octagonal rotunda finished in granite and marble. It has been referred to as "an unabashed expression of civic pride" by David Lowe in *Lost Chicago*.

In 1898, Cobb moved to Washington D.C., on the promise of a major commission for American University. That commission never materialized and four years later, Cobb moved to New York City where he designed several notable buildings, including the Liberty Building which the *Guide to New York City Landmarks* refers to as "an important precedent to the Woolworth Building." At the time of its construction, Liberty Tower was called "the tallest building in the world on so small an area of ground."

History

The Chicago Varnish Company was founded in 1865 by Anson C. Potwin (c.1805-1888) and his son-in-law, former Union Army Captain Otto Morgan (1838-1923). Potwin's son, William S. (1838-1929), joined the business in 1879. According to a description of the company published in 1917, the company was "instituted on a modest scale and the development of the enterprise kept pace with the marvelous progress of Chicago, especially after the Great Fire of 1871."

Varnish-making was one of those essential, but unglamorous, components of architecture and the decorative arts trades. Its value was the subject of the nearly poetic musings of the author of *Chicago Commerce* in 1884:

Indeed, when we come to consider how large a part varnish plays in the affairs of life there is still room for surprise even to the best informed. Where I sit writing, this desk on which I lean, the chair in which I sit, and indeed most of the furniture which meets the eye, owes its lustrous beauty to a cloudy mass of gum which years ago exuded from giant trees in the heart of Madagascar.

Varnish is a resin-based solution most often used for finishing woodwork. In combination with oils, such as linseed or tung oil, it forms a thin, hard surface which can be tinted, making it valuable for both its protective and decorative qualities. In addition to furniture and woodwork applications, varnishes were also employed for painting conservation and maritime uses. There are two basic types of varnishes: *oil*, which is made from hard gum or resins (e.g. copal from African forests) and is used mainly for

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

woodwork; and *spirit*, derived from softer resins found in southeast Asia, used for paintings.

When the Chicago Varnish Company was formed, it was one of only five varnish manufacturers in Chicago. Its offices and factory were located on the west side of Pine Street – now Michigan Avenue – between Delaware and Chestnut streets (now the location of the Fourth Presbyterian Church), in an area known as “the Sands.” The Lake Michigan shoreline was then located immediately across Pine Street.

The business was incorporated in 1883, but it appears to have been a closely held corporation between members of the Potwin and Morgan families. Anson Potwin, who was the president of the firm from its founding, died in 1888 and was succeeded by Morgan. William Potwin became the treasurer and general manager. The following year, the firm moved its factory complex from Pine Street, which was becoming an upscale residential neighborhood, to the 2100-block of North Elston Avenue, between Paulina and Ashland avenues. However, the company retained its business office on Pine Street.

Demand for Chicago Varnish Company products increased during the 1880s and '90s, as people in Chicago and elsewhere built larger houses and commercial buildings with elaborate woodwork. The company opened branch offices in Boston (1884) and New York (1892). The firm was one of the leading manufacturers in the city, and was described in *A History of the City of Chicago* (1900), which portrayed the growth of the city and its major businesses:

The special lines of goods manufactured by this [Chicago Varnish] company are varnishes for coaches and carriages; for the interior of buildings. From the costly residence to the humble cottage; for omnibuses, wagons and agricultural implements of every description, and also for pianos, furniture, caskets, and various other purposes. It manufactures the remarkable marine varnish known as “Navalite,” which has a worldwide reputation for its beauty and durability, this latter quality being one of which the company boasts in all its productions.

In 1892, Chicago Varnish leased space in the Loop (on Dearborn Street, between Randolph and Lake streets) for its offices. That same year, the firm purchased the parcel on the southeast corner of Dearborn and Kinzie streets, apparently with the intention of

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

constructing its own edifice. However, for unknown reasons, work on the new structure did not begin until 1894, and city directories first listed the company at its new location in 1895,

When the Chicago Varnish Co. opened its new headquarters just north of the Chicago River, the area was a jumble of factories, warehouses, and rail- and shipyards. Many of the city's first factories had sprung up on the River's north bank, including a tannery, brickyard, iron foundries, and breweries. The north bank was also an important site for railroad operations, dating back to 1847, when the Galena and Chicago Union laid tracks running down the center of Kinzie Street. Railroad freight yards and warehouses soon occupied large tracts of land on the riverfront.

Workers in these early businesses lived in frame cottages west of Wells Street, while the well to do lived in mansions along Wabash Avenue and Rush Street, north of Ohio Street. Although the Great Fire of 1871 destroyed almost everything in the area, it was rebuilt largely with its old mix of uses. During the 1880s and 1890s, many of the one- and two-story commercial and residential buildings were replaced with simple loft structures of five and six stories. In this environment of ordinary-looking, utilitarian structures, the Chicago Varnish Building was splendidly distinguished by its finely finished brick- and stonework and its animated roofline.

Throughout its existence the Chicago Varnish Building has had a history as varied as its surroundings. It initially housed the Varnish Company's offices and showroom, and was a distribution center for its products that were shipped on the Chicago River and by rail. Its most exotic early use, however, was as a "resin museum" that the company maintained at the site for many years. The museum was described in *A History of the City of Chicago* (1900).

The groundwork of fine varnishes is a fossil resin, which is found in the earth in distant parts of the world. In its Chicago office the [Chicago Varnish] company exhibits the finest collection of these resins that is to be seen anywhere. Even the most extensive museums of England and Europe do not contain an exhibit equal to this, which, for its singular beauty, is well worth a visit from anyone. In some of these transparent pieces of resins are embedded superb beetles, preserved for all time from the action of the air, and this displaying them in the natural beauty of life. These insects thus buried are perhaps thousands of years old. The

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

company has been gathering this collection for over a quarter of a century, and is continually adding new specimens of interest and value.

The company donated this collection of more than 300 specimens to the Field Museum of Natural History in 1913-1914.

Changes in the Varnish Building's neighborhood began to affect the company's operations in the early 20th century. Shipping by rail and truck supplanted river transit, and wholesale grocery companies and food processors became the dominant industries north of the river. Large warehouses – like those of Hiram Sibley Co. (1883, since demolished), which faced the Chicago River between Clark and Dearborn streets; Thompson Baking Co. (1912), on the southwest corner of Kinzie and Clark streets and Reid, Murdoch & Co. (1914), facing the river between Clark and LaSalle streets – were built in the area to take advantage of the nearby rail lines. The Varnish Company's office and showroom activities became increasingly at odds with other uses in the area.

In 1910, the company left the building, consolidating its operations at its Elston Avenue site, where a new administration building was erected near the company's existing factory. Designed by the prestigious architecture firm of Marshall & Fox, this Georgian-Revival building (1909; 2100 N. Elston Avenue) was said to have been modeled on the Liberty Hall in Philadelphia.

The Varnish Company founders, Otto Morgan and William Potwin, continued to lead the company in its new location. A description of the business in 1917 lists them as president and first vice-president, respectively, and notes that the company was "one of the largest concerns of its kind in the Union." However, the deaths of Potwin and Morgan in 1920 and 1923, respectively, appear to have brought on the circumstances leading to the company's dissolution three years later.

In 1925, the Chicago Varnish Company Building, which had been leased to various entities since 1910, was sold. For the next four-and-a-half decades, the building was the headquarters of two food-processing companies.

Thomas Alexander Somerville bought the building in 1925, and his company, Hunter, Walton & Co., used the structure as the offices and distribution plant for its wholesale butter, egg, and cheese business.

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

Louis Caravetta, owner of the Ehrat Cheese Co., bought the building in 1939. Photos taken during the company's occupation show an "E" (for Ehrat) covering the clock faces in the stone roundels over the corner entrance. The company, which packaged Italian specialty foods, used the building for curing, grating, packaging and distributing the food products from its Wisconsin plant. To accommodate these uses, Caravetta had architects Dubin & Dubin draw up remodeling plans in 1946. The original spaces and finishes were likely altered at that time.

Over the last three decades, the use of the building has shifted from food processing to fine dining, in response to the growing popularity of the Near North Side as a center for nightlife. In 1971, the Ehrat Co. leased the building to the Kinzie Street Steak and Chop House. In 1980, the building was sold to the Miller brothers, who operated "Miller's on Kinzie" steak house.

In 1986, Dearborn-Kinzie Partners purchased the building and refurbished it, cleaning the masonry, and installing new windows that replicated the original double-hung configuration. Harry Caray's Restaurant was designed to occupy all four floors of the building, and the late sports broadcaster's celebrity has given further prominence to an already well-known landmark.

Through all these ownerships, the exterior of the building remains remarkably intact, a tribute both to its craftsmanship and its distinctive style of architecture.

Integrity

The Chicago Varnish Building looks much the same today as it did when it was first built: its unique identity is intact. Though it has lost some of its original details, there is more than enough still in place to make the Chicago Varnish Building a textbook illustration of the Dutch Renaissance Revival and an exceedingly rare surviving example of its type. The building retains all the critical features needed to convey its historical value. Indeed, the Varnish Building displays the key elements of this rare architectural style more plainly than any other building in Chicago. All the telltale features of the Dutch Renaissance Revival style are immediately apparent on the exterior of the Varnish Building, including the decorative contrasting stonework and banding, the exaggerated pitch of the roof, and the high stepped gables.

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

The quality of the original construction is such that only minor restorative interventions have been required to maintain the Varnish Building's integrity over its century-long life. The tuck-pointing was exceptionally well executed and has taken nothing from the original brickwork. The stonework maintains its original crisp articulation. Both the stonework and brickwork contain ample evidence of the original laborers' skill in constructing this building. The reproduction of the windows has preserved the building's original fenestration.

Taken as a whole, the design of the Chicago Varnish Building remains intact. While the interiors have undergone changes, the original architectural conception of the building is still whole. The configuration of the spaces remains as it was originally and, thus, conveys the historic use of the building. This is especially true of the fourth floor and attic level, which appear untouched and were probably used as storage spaces from the building's beginning. Even in those areas where interior finishes have disappeared however, the organization of interior spaces, the proportions and scale of the interiors is original. As it was from the beginning, the Varnish Building's structural system is expressed in the bearing walls that define the principal interior spaces.

Comparisons demonstrate the Chicago Varnish Building is the best example in all of Chicago of the Dutch Renaissance Revival style. This flamboyant style, exceedingly rare in the Chicago area, is worthy of preservation. It is also illustrative of the late-19th-century architect's impulse to match historic European styles with American commissions. The commercial nature of the Chicago Varnish Buildings lends it a particular verisimilitude with its Dutch cousins. Holland was one of the few countries to develop a sophisticated middle-class architecture celebrating commerce. Thus, the Dutch Renaissance Revival style proved an especially apt choice for the Chicago Varnish Building. As a warehouse, office and "resin museum" the Chicago Varnish Building was more ambitious than its humbler industrial neighbors surrounding it in 1895. The Dutch style lent the building, the appropriate architectural vocabulary to express its higher aspirations.

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Chicago Varnish Company Building

Verbal Boundary Description

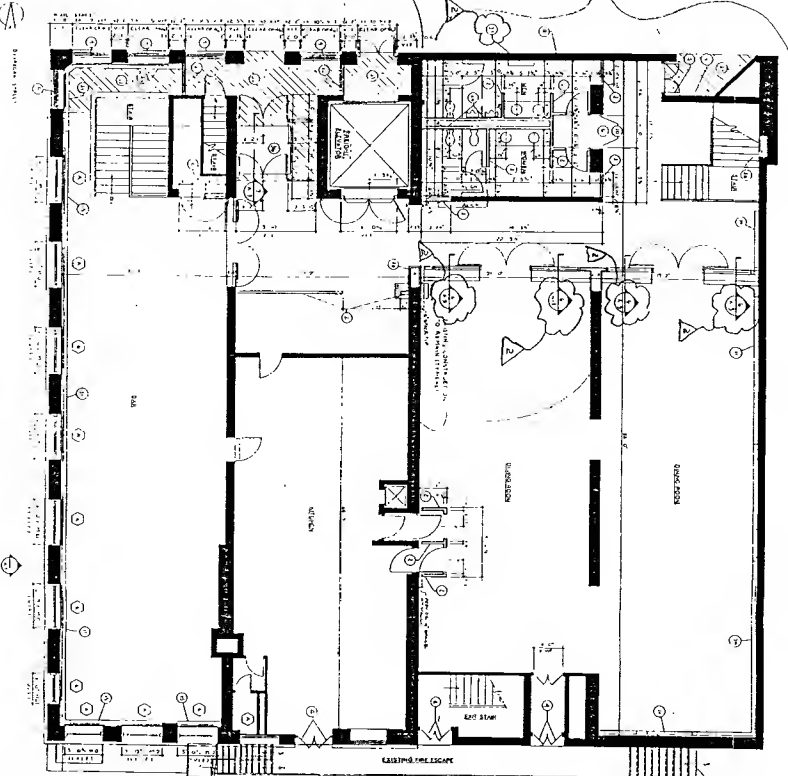
The west half of the combined Lots 1 and 2 in Block I of the Original Town of Chicago in Section 9, Township 39 Northwest Corridor, Range 14., all in Cook County, Illinois (Permanent Index Number 17-09-410-001).

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Chicago Varnish Company Building.

*NON
overlapping
cold trawl*

*Chicago
Varnish
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Chicago Varnish Company Building
Cook County, Illinois

313 WEST KINZIE RENOVATION
1910-1911
ARCHITECT: [illegible]
ENGINEER: [illegible]
DRAWN BY: [illegible]

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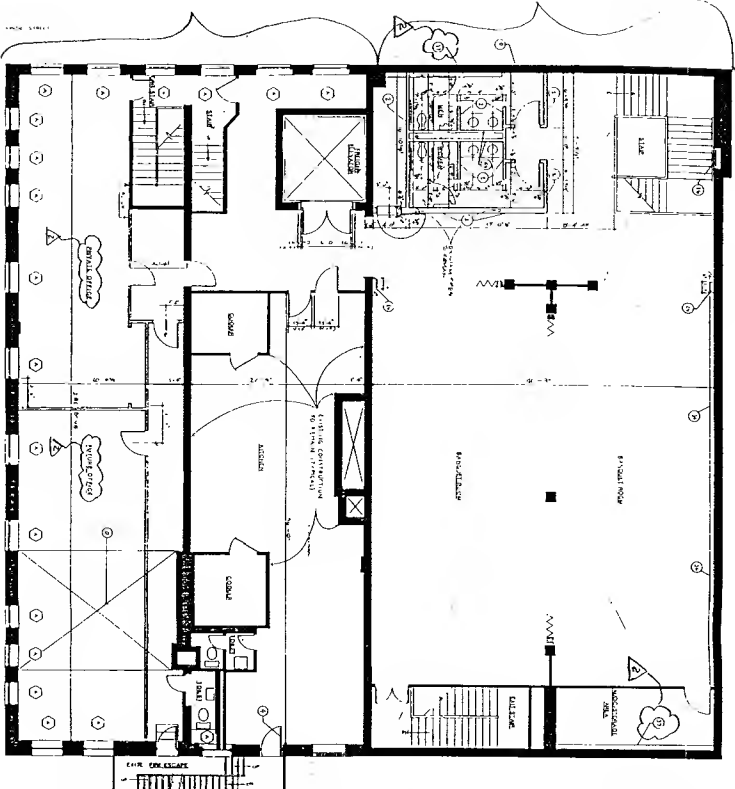
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23 WEST KINZIE RENOVATION
 2ND FLOOR RENOVATION
 1100 WEST MONROE STREET
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604
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SECOND FLOOR PLAN



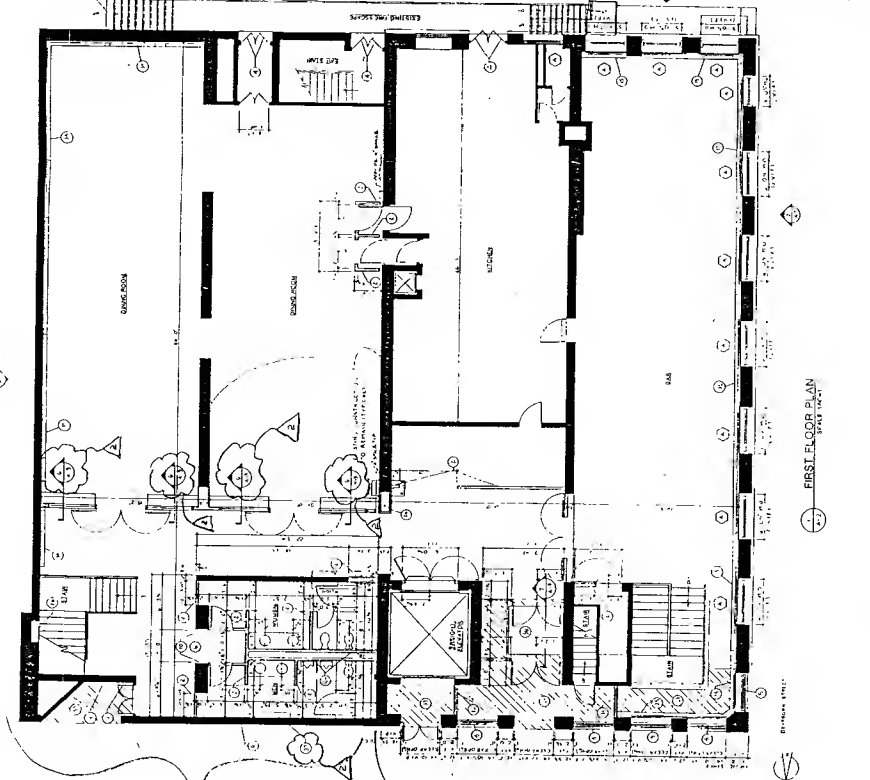
Chicago
 Varnish
 COMPANY
 Building

NON
 CONTRIBUTING
 Addition

Chicago Varnish Company Building
 Cook County, Illinois

33 WEST FINCH RENOVATION
 STATEMENT OF WORK
 1-1-2024 - 1-1-2025
 1-1-2024 - 1-1-2025

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NEW
 counter, lighting
 additional

Chicago
 Yarnish
 Company
 Building

71 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 1/1/2024

1/1/2024

1/1/2024

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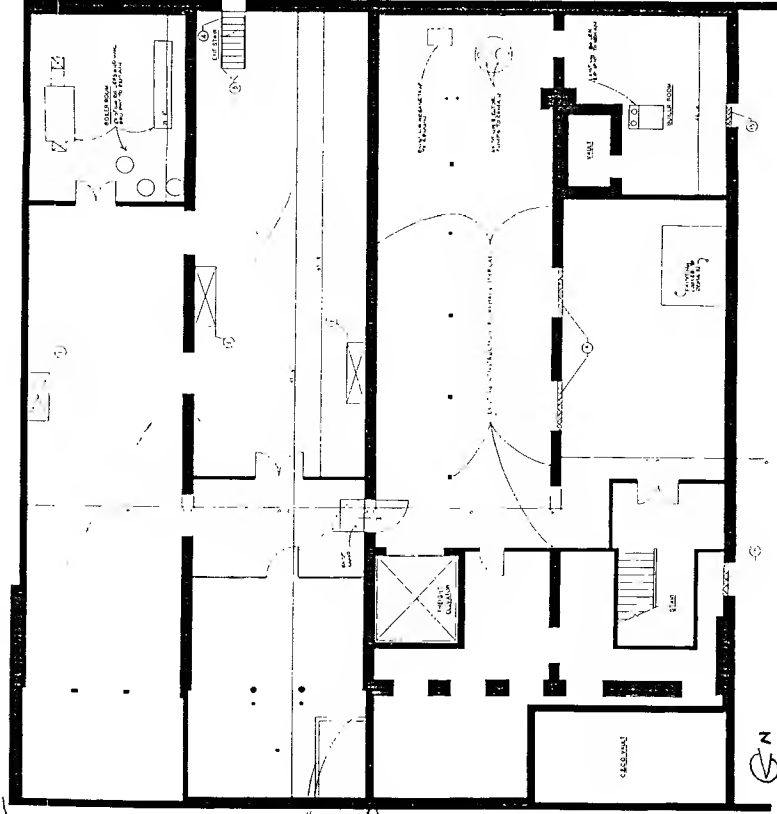
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A-2

Chicago Yarnish Company Building
 Cook County, Illinois

<p>33 WEST KENNE RENOVATION EXISTING FLOOR PLAN AS SHOWN ON SHEET 101 10/10/1911</p>	
<p>REVISION LEVEL, FLOOR PLAN</p>	



Chicago Varnish

Add 7-11-11

Chicago Varnish Company Building
 Cook County, Illinois

JUL 2 - 2001

Preservation Services



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to send you the following announcements and actions on properties for the National Register of Historic Places. For further information contact Edson Beall via voice (202) 343-1572, fax (202) 343-1836, regular or e-mail: Edson_Beall@nps.gov

Visit our award winning web site: www.cr.nps.gov/nr

JUN 22 2001

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 6/11/01 THROUGH 6/15/01

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

GEORGIA, BURKE COUNTY, McCanaan Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery, McCanaan Church Rd., Sardis vicinity, 01006643, LISTED, 6/14/01

GEORGIA, CLARKE COUNTY, Brightwell Shotgun Row, 366-376 Barber St., Athens, 01000642, LISTED, 6/14/01

GEORGIA, CRAWFORD COUNTY, Williams-Moore-Hillsman House, West Hopewell Rd. at Colbert Rd., Roberta vicinity, 01000645, LISTED, 6/14/01

GEORGIA, FULTON COUNTY, Building at 161 Spring St., 161 Spring St., NW, Atlanta, 01000644, LISTED, 6/14/01

GEORGIA, FULTON COUNTY, Means Street Historic District, Bounded by Marietta St., Bankhead and Ponders Aves., and the Southern rail line, Atlanta, 01000648, LISTED, 6/14/01

ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, Warm Ayr Research House, 110F W. Stoughton St., Urbana, 01000595, LISTED, 6/12/01

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Chicago Varnish Company Building, 33 W. Kinzie St., Chicago, 01000649, LISTED, 6/14/01

INDIANA, TIPPECANOE COUNTY, St. Mary Historic District, Roughly bounded by Main, South, 10th and 14th Sts., Lafayette, 01000622, LISTED, 6/14/01

LOUISIANA, LIVINGSTON PARISH, Castleberry Boarding House, 18290 Cooper St., Port Vincent, 01000624, LISTED, 6/12/01

MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY, Crocker Field Historic District, River St., Fitchburg, 01000651, LISTED, 6/14/01

MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY, Warren Town Hall, 1 Main St., Warren, 01000650, LISTED, 6/14/01

MICHIGAN, SAGINAW COUNTY, Roethke Houses, 1759 and 1805 Gratiot Ave., Saginaw, 00001485, LISTED, 6/08/01

NEVADA, DOUGLAS COUNTY, Gale, Lena N., Cabin, 726 Cedar St., Zephyr Cove, 01000586, LISTED, 6/12/01

NEVADA, WASHOE COUNTY, Bethel AME Church, 220 Bell St., Reno, 01000587, LISTED, 6/12/01

OKLAHOMA, CLEVELAND COUNTY, Leibertzer, H.E., House, 701 W. Brooks, Norman, 01000655, LISTED, 6/14/01 (Bruce Goff Designed Resources in Oklahoma MPS)

OKLAHOMA, GARVIN COUNTY, First National Bank Building, 100 West Main, Stratford, 01000659, LISTED, 6/14/01

OKLAHOMA, LINCOLN COUNTY, Rock Cafe, 114 W. Main St., Stroud, 01000661, LISTED, 6/14/01 (Route 66 in Oklahoma MPS)

OKLAHOMA, MCINTOSH COUNTY, Oklahoma Odd Fellows Home at Checotah, 211 West North St., Checotah, 01000660, LISTED, 6/14/01

OKLAHOMA, MURRAY COUNTY, Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District, West Muskogee St., from W 1st St. to W 5th St., and W 5th., Sulphur, 01000662, LISTED, 6/14/01

OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA COUNTY, Jones, Charles G., Farmstead, 12061 NE 108th St., Jones, 01000658, LISTED, 6/14/01

OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA COUNTY, The "Y" Chapel of Song, 100 N. University; on the campus of the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, 01000657, LISTED, 6/14/01

OKLAHOMA, TULSA COUNTY, Riverside Studio, 1381 Riverside Dr., Tulsa, 01000656, LISTED, 6/14/01 (Bruce Goff Designed Resources in Oklahoma MPS)

OKLAHOMA, TULSA COUNTY, White City Historic District, Roughly bounded by E. 2nd St., S. Fulton Av./Frisco RR Tracks, E. 11th St., and S. Yale Ave., Tulsa, 01000663, LISTED, 6/14/01

SOUTH DAKOTA, BRULE COUNTY, Dunlap Methodist Episcopal Church, Jct. of 369th Ave. and 264th St., Platte vicinity, 01000666, LISTED, 6/14/01

SOUTH DAKOTA, MINNEHAHA COUNTY, Brandon Village, 2.5 mi. SW of Brandon, Brandon vicinity, 01000664, LISTED, 6/14/01

TEXAS, HALE COUNTY, Plainview Commercial Historic District, Roughly bounded by E. 4th, Austin, E. 3th, and Ash Sts. (both sides), Plainview, 82004855, ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 6/11/01

TEXAS, TOM GREEN COUNTY, Harris Drug Store, 114 S. Chadbourne St., San Angelo, 01000665, LISTED, 6/14/01 (San Angelo MRA)